

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE 173

READER'S DIGEST
December 1980

BY DAVID REED

In almost 30 years as the communist master spy in East Berlin, Mischa Wolf has inflicted immense damage on the West

East Germany's Sinister Superspook

EVEN FROM A DISTANCE there is something intimidating about No. 22 Normannenstrasse, a complex of office buildings in a grimy industrial sector of communist East Berlin. Roofs bristle with radio antennas, and the area is blocked off and guarded by elite troops. This is East Germany's Ministry for State Security, part of which is the notorious Hauptverwaltung Aufklärung (HVA)—the goose-stepping junior partner of the Soviet KGB intelligence apparatus.

Lt. Gen. Markus "Mischa" Wolf, head of the HVA, has long been regarded by the CIA and West German intelligence as one of the ablest spy chiefs in the world. In almost 30 years on the job, he has inflicted immense damage on Western security. His specialty is spying on West Germany. He is so good at it that the KGB pretty well leaves the Federal Republic to him; he has saturated it with several thousand active agents and "sleepers" (who remain hidden, sometimes for years, until needed). Probably no other country is so spy-ridden.

Wolf's legions have infiltrated every aspect of West German life—government, political parties, labor unions, business, scientific research, the military. Because West Germany and the 200,000 American troops stationed there are the key to NATO defense of Europe, the security of all partners in the alliance has been undermined by Wolf's ubiquitous spies. Nearly 300 of them have been uncovered in recent years, but as fast as they are identified, the coldly calculating Wolf sluices in new ones

Every day, at 5 a.m., coded radio messages—usually numbers in five-digit groups—crackle from No. 22 Normannenstrasse. West German authorities listen, fume, and wonder whom Wolf is contacting this time and what he is ordering done. No sooner does West German security crack HVA codes than Wolf whips out new ones.

Loyal Legions. Before the Berlin Wall was built in 1961, 2.6 million East Germans skipped to the West, Wolf's sleepers among them. One such, Günter Guillaume, was sent across in 1956, with orders to infiltrate the Social Democratic Party. He rose through party ranks and, after the Social Democrats came to power in 1969, scored beyond his wildest hopes. Guillaume became a confidential aide to Willy Brandt, Social Democrat leader and the new chancellor. For two years, the HVA and KGB had ringside seats on Brandt's secret dealings with President Nixon and other NATO chiefs of state.

Although Guillaume eventually realized that he was under suspicion, he made no attempt to flee. One possible explanation is that Wolf wanted him caught, to create a major political scandal in West Germany. That is just what happened: Brandt was forced to resign the chancellorship in the uproar that followed Guillaume's arrest and sentencing to 13 years' imprisonment.

The Berlin Wall has cut the flow of refugees to a trickle, but these days Wolf often orders agents into West Germany via other countries. Each agent is given a "legend," perhaps the identity of a West German who

has left the country or died. Prospects are also recruited by Wolf among the six million citizens of the Federal Republic who cross the border each year to visit East German relatives and friends. Blackmail and other inducements are applied: "Do us a little favor and your aunt in East Germany will be taken care of."

Because they share the same language and culture, agents have little difficulty boring into the West German woodwork. Probing continually for soft spots in NATO, Wolf's legions are interested in everything that goes on in West Germany—foreign-policy deliberations, trade questions, inside political dope. Scientific institutes, atomic-power plants and high-technology industries are prime targets, and the HVA maintains a stable of scientists and engineers to evaluate stolen data.

Wolf goes to great pains to keep his agents happy, and loyal to the boss. West German intelligence has decoded messages from him congratulating agents on birthdays or on the birth of a child. Unlike other intelligence services, the HVA never disavows a captured agent. After an infiltrated spy's arrest, a moving van will appear at his home in West Germany, load his furniture and haul it to East Berlin, where it is stored for him. Agents who have served prison terms receive heroes' welcomes—and back pay—on their return, then are assigned to desk jobs.

Elegant Survivor. East Germany proclaims itself the "first German workers' and peasants' state," but there is nothing proletarian or hayseed about the boss spy. Tall and slender, Wolf has elegant if cool mannerisms, and dresses impeccably. He peers at the world through horn-rimmed glasses, and chain-smokes Camels.

With others in the ruling elite, he has a comfortable two-story home at No. 18 Majakowskiring in East Berlin's Pankow section, a few blocks from the Wall. But Wolf abhors publicity. When group photographs of East German leaders are published, the 57-year-old superspook's face is always conspicuously absent.

CONTINUED